

VZCZCXRO7950
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0067 0091553
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 091553Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5159
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0470

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000067

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TIME FOR TALKS BETWEEN KRG AND TURKEY

REF: BAGHDAD 4199

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Despite their strong reaction to Turkish airstrikes, including Massoud Barzani's refusal to meet Secretary Rice (reftel), Iraqi Kurdish leaders are continuing

SIPDIS
to implement the anti-PKK measures they had previously imposed. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani, and KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani condemned the January 4 Diyarbakir bombing, which appears to be an indication that they are still committed to playing a constructive role in addressing the PKK problem. We should move quickly to get political contacts moving either bilaterally or trilaterally before inevitable additional strikes by the Turks in retaliation for PKK terror attacks in Turkey make it much more difficult for the Kurds to participate. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Iraqi Kurds remain angry at recent Turkish airstrikes, but are not at this time retaliating through the Iraqi political process. The Kurdistan Alliance like other blocs straggled back last week from a long COR vacation, but well over half their deputies attended the session on January 3rd, and we expect nearly all to return within the coming week. There remains a possibility the Kurds will slow-roll key legislation to discredit Prime Minister Maliki, with whom they are engaged in a high-stakes struggle over political and economic issues (reftel), but we have no indication they have done this and expect them to vote for the de-Ba'athification law as planned.

KRG Carries On With Anti-PKK Measures

¶3. (C) KRG leaders, while protesting the airstrikes publicly, appear privately to be sticking to the measures against the PKK they previously imposed. Talabani and Massoud Barzani in late December assured the Ambassador the KRG would continue roadblocks, financial interdictions, and heightened airport security. Anecdotal evidence and reporting in other channels confirms the restrictions remain in place and have made normal operation more difficult for the PKK, but even the most diligent application of these promises probably will not prevent the PKK's ability to conduct attacks as they are thought to have many alternate supply routes through mountain passes and a good stockpile of weapons.

¶4. (C) After the terrorist bombing in Diyarbakir, both Talabani and Nechirvan Barzani made strong statements condemning the attack and offering condolences to the victims. We take this as a signal (as was Talabani's statement to the Ambassador that he is still willing to travel to Ankara) that the KRG leaders are still willing to engage with Turkey on a solution to the PKK problem, despite

their suspicions of Turkish motives vis-a-vis the KRG.

15. (C) With Turkish attacks in Northern Iraq all but inevitable in the wake of the recent terrorist bombings, it is all the more urgent that we get the Turks and Iraqis talking about their joint problem while KRG leaders still have some political space to participate. Under the circumstances, a return trip by Foreign Minister Zebari to Anakra might be a relatively non-controversial way to begin. This would complement the constructive value we think will come from planned Jan 15 visit to Baghdad by TGS Deputy Saygun, who has been invited by General Petraeus. Talabani should be taken at his word as soon as the Turks are willing to have him.
CROCKER